

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

DECLARATION

Against Transubstantiation.

IN

A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1778.

CONSIDERATION

ON THE

DEGREE

Against Transgression

A LETTER TO A FRIEND



LONDON

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1822



S I R,

IN my former Letter, I proposed to you my objection to the Oath of Supremacy; and in this Letter I beg leave to lay before you some observations on the Declaration against Transubstantiation, but not as it is a Dogma, or Doctrine of a Church. Two French Divines, Mr. Arnauld and Mr. Claude, have, in their contest, exhausted in a manner every argument that can be offered by a reasonable man on either side of the question; but I mean to consider the Declaration as it is a principal part of the political Initiation of an Englishman, or the Test of admission into the rights of a British subject. It is this Declaration that forms the great chaos, or boundary, between the elect or chosen subjects, who are to enjoy all the liberties and privileges of Freemen, and the reprobate, who, refusing to sign this Declaration, are condemned to live, if not under the pressure, at least under the everlasting apprehension of laws highly penal, and are subjected to many disabilities and vexations. Before I examine this mode of probation, ordained for trying or proving men guilty of the Crime of Popery, it is proper to explain that part of the Crime of Popery which I omitted in my last Letter, and which, according to Mr.

B

Locke,

Locke, and the ablest writers on the subject, consists in the opinion, or doctrine, that persons of the Popish Communion are not bound by a moral or conscientious obligation to keep faith with those they call Heretics, or to fulfil promises that are made to persons of a communion different from their own; also that Absolutions or Bulls may be obtained from their Chief Pastor, the Bishop of Rome, to dispense with the internal obligation of fulfilling such promises.

In accusations for matters of opinion, no consequences ought to be imputed but what the accused admit as a part of their tenets: for example, many consequences may be inferred from the Predestinarian doctrine, that would be very pernicious to human society; but however just the reasoning may be, still if the Predestinarian does not admit those consequences to be a part of his principles, it would be very unjust to punish or censure the Predestinarian for consequences deduced by his adversaries, and not by himself. Wherefore in such accusations the professions of the party accused ought to be admitted as evidence, as he alone can be conscious of what are his internal principles. Now those who are accused of this part of the Crime of Popery, constantly deny those imputations, and say their doctrine is, that the Religion of any of the contracting parties does not affect, or any ways discharge, the conscientious obligations of fulfilling the contract, and that only the party, to whom a right is acquired by a valid promise or agreement, can remit or dispense with the engagement; that all dispensations whatsoever, to the prejudice of such person, are void; that no perjury, or other evil, is to be committed in order to propagate Religion, or that any other
good

good may ensue from it; that the catechisms, or Books of instruction, in their hands, teach no such doctrine as that which they are accused of; and if any such doctrine is to be found in the mouldy pages of some obscure writers, and produced by the violence of party spirit, written perhaps to palliate the faithless conduct of Princes, and which has no relation to common life: Roman Catholics are instructed to renounce and detest such doctrine, as contrary to natural and revealed religion, and big with mischievous consequences to human society. To confirm this representation of their doctrine, Roman Catholics appeal to matter of fact, and ask if they are not as faithful in their dealings as persons of other persuasions. The Spaniards, for example, are thought the most intolerant in their zeal; they ought therefore to observe less good faith than other people in their transactions with those who differ from them in religion; yet the case is so far otherwise, that greater confidence is placed in them, particularly in that great trade which is carried on to the Spanish West Indies, than is done in any other branch of commerce; and if the most rigid Calvinists of Holland or New England were factors to the British merchants, it may be questioned whether they would transact the business with more disinterested fidelity.

The Roman Catholic subjects of the Protestant Princes in Germany are employed in their armies, and are not accused or suspected of being wanting in the fidelity they have sworn to their Sovereigns. In Holland, the Roman Catholics are very numerous, and are remarkably attached to the Protestant government of their country; they were never accused of betraying the cause of the Re-

public, when the Bishop of Munster, and afterwards Lewis the Fourteenth, had conquered great part of the United Provinces. The late Stadtholder was so convinced of their fidelity, that upon the Roman Catholics making some complaint, that wise humane Prince not only redressed their grievance, but assured them there were no people in the Seven Provinces on whom he would more willingly rely for the defence of the State, or the protection of his own person. Persecution might have made a Dutch Roman Catholic a bad subject; but that would have been owing to the feelings of the man, and ought not to be attributed to the principles of his religion. Suspicions and jealousies in the minds of the persecutors, and discontent and resentment in those who are persecuted, are consequences naturally arising from persecution among men of all Churches and of all nations.

Mr. Locke, it is true, mentions in his first letter on Toleration this want of fidelity in contracts with persons of a different religion, and the admitting of the Primacy of the Bishop of Rome, as constituting the Crime of Popery. But you will please to observe, that he wrote his first letter in Holland, where he had been forced to retire by those who were thought to favour the succession of the Duke of York to the Crown of these realms; and something must be allowed for Mr. Locke's personal provocations, and for the violence of the times and of his patron, Lord Shaftsbury. Besides, a system of Toleration, which included Roman Catholics, might, at its first appearance, have been rejected by all his friends, and construed into a disapprobation of some of their measures; but in the long letters which he published

published after the Revolution, on the same subject, and where the same exceptions would naturally have occurred, the violence of party spirit being abated by success, he takes no further notice of those objections against Roman Catholics, but clearly proves liberty in religion to be the general right of all mankind; so that on cooler deliberation he appears to have thought that all his fellow-Christians were intitled to the same Toleration which he would have allowed to Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans. If one Church is to be excepted out of the general rule of Toleration, on account of some objections to its Tenets, or for the misconduct of some of its members in times past, it is very obvious that arguments will not be wanting for excepting others, whenever the more powerful Church is inclined to severity, or, to speak more properly, whenever a predominant party in the State is determined to use the pretence of religion for oppressing or extirpating its opponents. Perhaps there never was an instance which more clearly shewed how far mankind might be carried away by party spirit, or mistaken zeal, than in this accusation, because the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland are in a manner the only people who suffer for not swearing and signing Declarations. They have never been accused or suspected of occasional conformity; and among themselves, they no longer consider a person as of their communion who has conformed. They must have been patient or weak to a degree of insensibility, to be so often deprived of their property, and to suffer many vexations under a great number of penal laws, besides all the weight of infamy and vilifying reproaches that have been thrown upon them for two centuries past, if they might have avoided all their sufferings
by

by obtaining dispensations for perjury, or if they could have satisfied their own consciences by equivocations, or any ways justified to their own minds the swearing or professing what they do not believe to be true. But what proves their innocence, even in the opinion of those who have decreed their punishment, is the manner of their trial, which is quite inconsistent with the accusation; for the Legislatures of these Kingdoms must undoubtedly have supposed Roman Catholics to have a proper sense of the obligation of oaths and promises, when they ordained them to be tried on penal statutes by no other evidence but that of their own Oaths and Declarations, and to be thereby exempted from all penalties. It would be manifest contradiction to punish persons for not swearing and signing Declarations, and at the same time to suppose them regardless of Oaths and other solemn engagements.

The hardship the Roman Catholics seem justly to complain of is, that they are not tried for the crimes or criminal opinions they are accused of, but for their doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is a very harmless dogma that ought to offend no man, as it has no relation to human society, or to the duties of the subject or of the citizen; that they are supposed to be guilty of holding criminal tenets, but are tried on one that is clearly and avowedly inoffensive, and being convicted of that their innocent belief, the Crime of Popery is imputed to them; that according to the rules of justice, in all other cases, men are tried for the crimes they are accused of: but this is one of the inconsistencies that usually attends persecution, and is a proof, among many others, of the erroneous principles

principles on which it is founded. The Primitive Christians were in like manner accused of every odious principle, and of every vice that could disgrace human nature; but the Test on which they were tried was by their offering incense to the statue of Jupiter, or by some other Pagan rites; and by their conforming to that Test, they were at once acquitted of all the crimes imputed to the Professors of the Christian Religion. They were never examined about their incestuous nightly meetings, their magical incantations, their murder of infants, their drinking human blood; no inquiry was made about all the other crimes imputed to them; they were acquitted of them all, and deemed entirely innocent, if they shook the incense-box before the statue of Jupiter; but if they refused, they were condemned as guilty of all the horrid crimes annexed to the name of Christian by the misrepresentations and prejudices of their Pagan fellow-subjects.

The Spaniards alleged many crimes and many doctrines, dangerous to the State, against the Moors and Jews; but they were not tried on those heads of accusation; their whole examination was, whether they had undergone circumcision, or their never having been known to eat the flesh of swine. A humorous writer has stated a case that may help to shew the absurdity of this mode of trial. A man was accused of stealing a horse; but when he was brought to his trial, no inquiry was made about his taking away the horse, or whether the horse had been seen in his possession, or about any other circumstance that tended to prove his guilt; but the sole question was, whether the horse had grazed in a round or in a square field. If the field was proved to be round, the man was condemned

demned as guilty of horse-stealing; but if it appeared by the evidence that the field was square, the man was acquitted and declared innocent. This mode of trial for horse-stealing appears unjust and absurd to every body, because there is no party influence, no false zeal to mislead our judgments. The Roman Magistrates were carried away by popular clamour, and the apprehension that the tutelar Deities of the Empire were offended by the enormous crimes of a profane and blasphemous race of men called Christians, and therefore in their proceedings against them they were not to be influenced by the common rules of equity, which ought to guide their judgments in all other cases. You, Sir, have such a discernment and insight into yourself, that you have acknowledged, with great candour, that you are under mountains of prejudices against Popery, as you expressed yourself, which have been formed from your earliest youth down to the present time, from the first instruction you received from your old nurse, who bid you beware of Popery, down to the last lecture on Prophecies, in which you imagine it was clearly proved, that every Papist is a member of the body of Antichrist.

That I may not have to encounter against this formidable weight of prejudices, and that you may consider the objections to the Declarations, which are a part of the national Test, with more impartiality, it may be proper that you should hear them from a man who is not a Papist, but who is a member of the Greek Church, and who has as great a dislike to the Pope of Rome as you have. This Greek then having perhaps in his breast some sparks of that love of freedom which once animated the heroes and ancient inhabitants of his country,

country, and hearing there was an Island where Civil liberty was the sole end of its government, and where men were governed by known and written laws, and not by the arbitrary will of Vizirs and Bashaws, he learns the English language, and comes to be admitted a free citizen in this land of liberty; and for this purpose he applies to a Counsellor, learned in the law, to be informed what he is to do, and what previous dispositions he is to make for obtaining such a favour. The learned Counsel gives his opinion: he apprehends the best method to be pursued in such cases is, to apply for an Act of Parliament for naturalization; that there were two foreigners, a Portuguese Jew and a German Moravian, who intended to solicit for such an Act of naturalization, and you, Sir, says the learned Counsel, may join with them, which will save a considerable expence. I suppose you will make no more difficulty than they do, in taking a bit of bread and a sup of wine, in one of our Churches, and that you will abjure the Pope and the Pretender, and sign the Declaration against Transubstantiation. But as in your own country you Greeks hear Mass, I am of opinion you may be suspected of the Crime of Popery, though your Pope may live at Constantinople. In such cases, there are two other Declarations which you must likewise sign. You Greeks are not suspected of any attachment to the Pope of Rome, and the claims of the Pretender are no longer supported by persons of any denomination. I will read to you the Declarations, in order that you may determine whether you will comply with that part of the political Initiation which the law requires, as every man must purge himself of all suspicion of his being popishly affected, before he is ad-

C

mitted

mitted to the rights and franchises of a subject of this realm. Pray, Mr. Greek, attend to the words of these Declarations.

The first Declaration, ordained by an Act of the twenty-fifth of Charles the Second, was in the following words :

“ I, A. B. do declare, that I do believe, that
 “ there is not any Transubstantiation in the Sacra-
 “ ment of the Lord’s Supper, or in the Elements
 “ of bread and wine at or after the Consecration
 “ thereof by any person whatsoever.”

After five years it was discovered, that the elements of bread and wine might be changed into the substance of the human body, or some other substance, and that the declaration was false, if understood in the general and indefinite manner in which it was first worded.

Therefore by an Act made in the thirtieth year of the reign of Charles the Second, the following Declaration was fixed upon as the national Test :

“ I, A. B. do solemnly and sincerely, in the
 “ presence of God, profess, testify, and declare,
 “ that I do believe, that in the Sacrament of the
 “ Lord’s Supper there is not any Transubstantiation
 “ of the Elements of bread and wine into the
 “ body and blood of Christ, at or after the con-
 “ secration thereof by any person whatsoever; and
 “ that the invocation, or adoration, of the Virgin
 “ Mary, or any other Saint, and the Sacrament
 “ of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church
 “ of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous. And
 “ I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess,
 “ testify, and declare; that I do make this De-
 “ claration,

“claration, and every part thereof, in the plain
 “and ordinary sense of the words, read unto me,
 “as they are commonly understood by English
 “Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation,
 “or mental reservation whatsoever, and without
 “any dispensation already granted me for this
 “purpose by the Pope, or any authority, or per-
 “son whatsoever, or without any hope of any
 “such dispensation from any person or authority
 “whatsoever, or without thinking that I am, or
 “can be, acquitted before God or man, or ab-
 “solved of this Declaration, or any part thereof,
 “although the Pope, or any other person or
 “persons, or power whatsoever, should dispense
 “with or annul the same, or declare that it was
 “null and void from the beginning.”

If you refuse, Sir, to sign these Declarations,
 you are not only incapacitated to receive the benefit
 of an Act of Naturalization, but you are also, in
 the eye of the law, guilty of the Crime of Popery,
 and your posterity, though born subjects of this
 realm, if they refuse to conform to this Test, will
 be excluded from our honourable profession, ren-
 dered incapable of purchasing any permanent prop-
 erty, and deemed unworthy of serving the State,
 even in the lowest capacity. If the Wife of your
 Son becomes a member of our Church, if she
 leaves her husband, if she takes away his children,
 he will be compelled to maintain them by our
 Courts of equity both in England and Ireland.
 If your Son has landed property, his own children
 may take it from him; if he leaves children and
 a wife of the same religion as his own, and
 by his will appoints her, or other persons po-
 pishly affected, guardians of his children, the
 Courts of equity will set the will aside, and appoint

for guardians persons who will teach his children, that their Popish parents, their relations, and all of that communion, were Children of the Man of sin and the Whore of Babylon, the Spawn of the Dragon and the Members of Antichrist. Mistake me not: I never heard these appellations in the Courts of equity, but I have heard them often from the Pulpit. Although the Courts of equity mitigate the severe letter of the law in other cases, yet they extend the laws against Popery, and have subverted the decrees and the common rules of property, that had been long established, in order that the Papist may not avoid his punishment, as in the case of Roper and Ratcliffe. Your descendants continuing in the profession of your religion, will also be exposed to many other vexatious and grievous penalties, enacted by a great number of penal laws; and they may be hanged for hearing Mass, and their Priests may be hanged, drawn, and quartered, as guilty of high treason; from which severe laws, according to my opinion, you will not be exempted by your Mass being said in Greek; for you have the same folly and absurdity in the belief of impossibilities, and the same idolatry and superstition in your mode of worship, which we profess the Church of Rome to be guilty of by these Declarations, which are established by our laws, and have been frequently confirmed by the legislature of this Kingdom. But as you seem surprised, let me tell you for your comfort, that though none of these most severe laws have ever been repealed or mitigated, and though you can neither have liberty of Religion, nor legal Toleration, yet by the lenity of Government, and the moderation of the present times, you may be connived at, and not persecuted by those

those laws that depend on the will of the Magistrate, and permitted to live in this Kingdom, and have the satisfaction of hearing and reading all our talkers and all our writers declare, that Religious liberty is one of those general and indefeasible rights which God and nature have given to mankind.

Before I conclude, I must desire you, Mr. Greek, not to run away with a notion, that when I consider you as guilty of the Crime of Popery, I mean that you are in communion with the Pope of Rome, or hold any correspondence with the emissaries of that See. No, Sir, the word Popery means any thing that is odious, and stands in opposition to the principles of the Man who pronounces the word. So the growth of Popery, when mentioned in the Northern part of this Island, or in the mouth of a Protestant Dissenter from our Church, means only that a considerable number of Dissenters attend the places of divine worship of the Church of England. Some well-meaning persons were deceived a few years ago, by this application of the word Popery to the Church of England. The doctrine generally believed in our Church, concerning good works and some other of our tenets, are commonly called Popery by the Dissenters; and in like manner, our written and established form of prayer, as it is opposite to their extempore cant, they call the language of the beast; the decent surplice of our ministers, a rag of the whore of Babylon; and Episcopacy is, according to them, the abomination of desolation in the Holy place. Thus they apply the prophetic parts of the Old and the New Testament against us, much in the same manner as we apply them against the Church of Rome. The word

word Popery is often made use of for party purposes; and in the mouth of a Republican it means a disposition to submit to Episcopacy in the Church, and to Monarchy in the State, and to those distinctions of ranks among men which are contrary to his levelling principles. In order to distinguish his meaning from that of other people, who use the word in a different sense, he commonly adds the word Slavery to the word Popery; but the legal or technical meaning of the word Popery is no more than a refusal or non-compliance with the law, which requires swearing such Oaths, and subscribing such Declarations. Whether the man believes the dogmas of our Church or of any other Church, or whether he believes any dogmas at all, is a matter quite indifferent, provided he conforms to the specific swearing and signing which the law ordains.

I call the refusal to swear and sign, the Crime of Popery, because no offence is justly punishable by human laws, but Crimes, or breaches of the order of society. Whether the not signing these Declarations is, in its own nature, criminal, it belongs not to me to determine. The law has made it a crime, and, no doubt, considers it, if we judge by the severity of the punishments, as a very atrocious crime. I, for my part, always follow the rule laid down by the great oracle of our profession, Lord Coke, never to think myself wiser than the law. The established opinions of the Courts of equity are a part of our law, and have the same weight of infallibility over my mind, that Lord Coke attributes to the law; and if the Courts of equity support wives against husbands, and children against parents, and deprive widows and relations of the infants left to their care, that
people

people may receive the true light of the gospel, instead of the fopperies of your tawdry religion, it is my duty to coincide with the opinion of the Courts of equity.

The Greek answered: Most learned Counsellor, permit me to request that you would withdraw your attention from those immense volumes that load your shelves, and for a short time consult the tablets of your own heart. There you might read, in indelible characters, what Solomon discovered three thousand years ago, That it is impossible for your Courts of equity, and all the power of the magistrate, to give to strangers the same tender feelings that parents have for their own offspring. The seeds and progress of virtue, during our youth, depend on our regard for our parents, and for those family relationships, which in well-disposed minds fix our affections, and have an influence more or less over all the actions of our lives.

By destroying the unions that constitute private society, and by abolishing in the minds of young persons those laws of nature which were prior to all magistrates, and which ought, in a certain degree, to remain independent of all Civil jurisdiction, you eradicate the seeds of virtue, and remove a natural principle which the hireling guardian seldom or never can replace. It is for want of this principle, as a Frenchman observed, that out of so many thousand children who are sent every year to the Foundling Hospitals, there are very few who ever become worthy members of society.

And I imagine that minors, taken from their natural guardians, and the relations and friends of their family, are divided in their affections,
whether

whether to adhere to filial duty and the suggestions of nature, or to believe their progenitors to have been the monsters described by their legal instructors, and the modern interpreters of prophecies. They probably hover between opposite principles, and embrace none, but fall the unhappy victims of those harpies who feed on the vices of friendless and unprincipled youth. I appeal to yourself, whether in all the course of your observation, the life and conduct of such unhappy minors have not confirmed the truth of my conjecture. Your pretence of religion, and doing what is most advantageous for the children, makes me recollect what the Turkish Cadi said, when he took away a younger brother and sister of mine. My afflicted parents were weeping over their unhappy progeny, when the Cadi told them: What I do is for their good. Your daughter promises to be very handsome; she may be admitted into the Seraglio of his Sublime Highness, and may have the glory of giving a Sultan to the world; or if the black Eunuch rejects her, she may be sent to the Seraglio of a Beglerbeg or of an Aga, an honour much preferable to that of being the wife of one of you miserable Greeks. To your son I open the road to all the honours and preferments of our vast Empire; and what is more, he will be taught the pure worship of the true God, instead of all your idolatries and superstitions. We shall require no other Test of the purity of his faith, but that he should declare that God is God, and Mahomet is his Prophet, instead of those long Creeds, Abjurations, and unintelligible Confessions of faith of you Greeks, and of your brother Infidels in the Northern and Western parts of Europe.

I repre-

I represented to the Cadi, that the same God was the author of the law of nature, and the revealer of all true religion; that to set aside that part of the law of nature which related to parents and children, under pretence of propagating a purer worship of the Deity, was to suppose a contrariety in the will of God, or that his will, as revealer of the purer religion, was contrary to his will as the author of those laws of nature which he had fixed in the human mind, but that in his divine laws all was consistent; that the Jewish and Christian dispensations had confirmed and enforced that part of the law of nature, and the same was done in many parts of the Alcoran. But the cruel Cadi would not listen to what I alledged, and was not moved by the tears of infants, the lamentations of disconsolate parents, and the deep anguish that appeared in all the relations and friends of our family.

I suppose those circumstances would have had more influence in your Courts of equity. The maxim laid down by your oracle, Lord Coke, which you have adopted, and which debars you from all enquiry into the propriety and the justice of your laws, seems to me to be calculated only for those countries where tyranny is indigenious, and where despotism has for ever reigned; for those solitary nations, who have little communication with other people, and seldom enjoy the pleasure of free conversation among themselves; where laws, customs, manners, and even dress remains the same for many ages: but in this country, where men may disclose their sentiments with the greatest freedom, where there is a liberal intercourse of society among yourselves, and likewise with foreigners of different nations, from whence

D

ensues

ensues a perpetual fluctuation in your dress and fashions, in your ideas and principles, and in your public or commercial interests: in such a country the laws ought not to be unalterable, like those of the Medes and Persians, but should be accommodated to the times, to the increase or variations in your commerce, and to all those political relations between your kingdom and the other powers of Europe, in which your glory and national interest are concerned.

To apply this to the laws by which those Declarations were established which you have been reading, I must desire you to observe, that since those laws were enacted, many revolutions have happened, which ought to have an influence on your negociations with foreign states, and on the interior police of your country. There are many reasons why the members of the Greek Church should be considered in another light than they were in the reign of your Charles the Second. A great Empire has been formed in the North, where our religion is the religion established by law, though a Toleration is wisely granted to persons of all other religions. A firm alliance with the Russian empire is, in many respects, of great importance to the British nation. Your commerce in the Russian harbours of the Baltic is very beneficial, and every year increasing. If the passage to the Black Sea is made free, your merchants may discover almost a new world, to which your manufactures may be carried, and from whence valuable returns may be made. It was to that Sea our first adventurers went in search of the Golden Fleece. There the Armenians, the great merchants of the East, may bring you the raw silk and other produces of the northern provinces of Persia, and
of

of all the countries that lie between the Caspian and the Black Seas. The Danube runs through the most fertile part of Europe, and the adjacent countries are stored with minerals of every kind. The Boristhenes, the Tanais, and the other northern rivers, may supply you with naval stores, and many important articles of commerce. Besides the trade of our country, the inhabitants of the coasts of Greece and of the islands of our Archipelago may be useful mariners; and, having no attachment to the government under which we now live, we are the fitter to be incorporated among the British subjects. Do you think, Sir, it is of no consequence to the glory of your kingdom, to your reputation for wisdom and knowledge, to your commercial interests and various connections with the people of other countries, that the Greeks, the Russians, the Armenians, and all the Christians of that great part of the globe which extends from Ethiopia to the frozen Seas of Muscovy, and from the shores of the Caspian Sea to those of the Baltic and the Adriatic, should be told that throughout the British dominions they are under a general law of proscription, that they cannot be naturalized, and their children, though born within your realms, may be subject to various punishments, under several penal laws, and that they are liable to all these hardships for no other cause but that of the imputed Crime of Popery, of which crime they are supposed to be guilty, if they do not subscribe to Declarations by which they renounce the dogmas of the Greek Church, and of all the Oriental Christian Churches? And what will appear extremely astonishing to all those nations is, that the dogmas required to be renounced by those Declarations, under such severe

penalties, have not, and are not pretended to have, any influence over the moral obligations of man to man, or to the social duties of any members of a civil society.

As this subject has a relation to the honour of your country and of its laws, I hope, Mr. Counsellor, you will permit me to state my objections to the particular parts of these Declarations, and to give you my reasons why I cannot sign them. You will please to recollect, that after the Jews had rejected the light of the gospel, and of the Christian dispensation, we were the most favoured nation. It was principally to us that the tidings of salvation, through the merits of Christ, were announced, and the sacred books of this new law were all, or for the most part, written in our language. Now if I sign the Declarations, I must in fact admit, that you understand the meaning of these books, in their original language, better than we do; and not only better than we modern Greeks do, who may be supposed to be stupefied by the long and severe government of ignorant Turks, but also better than the ancient Fathers of our Church, through whose hands these books have been transmitted to us; and even better than our ancestors, the Corinthians, to whom St. Paul explained this mystery; for I have never heard of any dissensions in our Church, concerning this mystery, though we have long details of all our religious controversies, which unhappily had too much influence over the state and government of our Empire. As our first Christian ancestors received daily the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and as the celebration of this mystery is, and always was, considered as the great Act of Religion in our Church, no alteration could be made in

in our doctrine concerning it, without violent contentions, particularly in a nation so inclined to disputation as we were. You talk of absurdity and impossibility. These words might be used with propriety, if the dogmas of Christian faith were inferences drawn by human reason; but the real Christian, when by his reason he is convinced of the authority of a divine revelation, has no other motive for his belief, or his assent to particular tenets, but that authority of the revelation to which he had before assented in general, as coming from God; and when questions or doubts arise, his only inquiry is, what has been revealed by Christ and taught by his Apostles. Our System is, that man's original sin was an inordinate desire of knowledge, beyond what was allotted to him, in his first state of probation; his principal punishment was darkness, ignorance, and errors; and these were suitable to his crime. The atonement likewise, which men are to offer to the Deity for the fault of their first parents, is admirably adapted to the nature of the transgression, and is a sacrifice of the human pride in its reasoning faculty, or a submission of the understanding to the obedience of faith, in believing mysteries incomprehensible; a sacrifice which you offer, when you believe that three distinct persons are one God, or when you believe that the second person, or the Word, assumed our human nature, and that an infinite almighty Being became a man of sorrows, and the outcast of the people. But I do not mean to disturb your belief: what I complain of is, that you will not allow other men to believe their mysteries, in the same manner as you desire not to be molested in the belief of your own. You would call the proceeding an unjust and cruel persecution

secution, if the Arian, the Jew, or the Mahometan punished the belief of your Trinity and Incarnation by the same severe laws, the same reproachful revilings, to which you condemn a brother Christian, who believes Transubstantiation.

I know the opinion of the Turks, and that they are much more offended at the mysteries you assent to, than at the mystery you have rejected. The latter they look upon as a ridiculous absurdity, but the others they call blasphemy and impiety. A Turk might apply to you a passage in our Gospel, and would probably tell you, why don't you pull the beam out of your own eye, before you pull the moat out of the eye of your brother? Another circumstance appears to me very surprising, which is, that you have singled out for your national Test, the disavowal of a dogma, which is one manner of explaining the mystery of the Lord's Supper, before you had settled among yourselves some other uniform manner, or form of words, for explaining that mystery. You have said what it is not, but you have not said what it is. In your Thirty nine Articles, you condemn our manner of explaining it, but say nothing about your own. Your modern Divines do not seem to me to be agreed on this subject any better than those who first settled the dogmas of your Church. I have read two of them: the one seems to have taken a system from a great lumber-room of Rabbinical learning, and, building his explanation on the Jewish ritual, he tells us the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a feast in commemoration of a sacrifice. This doctrine was certainly not built on that Rock on which Christ built his Church; for I am told it was blown down by one observation, that the death of Christ
was

was a sin-offering, and that according to the Jewish ceremonial law, there was no feast in commemoration of that kind of sacrifice that was called a sin-offering. The other Divine has given a very plain and very intelligible account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by shewing it to be no more than what you called it, eating a bit of bread and drinking a sup of wine, to the memory of a departed friend. This explanation seems to remove all doubt and all mystery; but this cannot be the sacrament, of which if a man partakes, he is to live for ever; and if he receives it unworthily, he eats and drinks damnation unto himself. Such rewards and such punishments cannot relate to the mere eating a bit of bread and drinking a sup of wine.

If Christ had intended nothing more, his followers would not have forsaken him, when he first announced this mystery to the Jews. All the blessings he had bestowed, all the signs and wonders he had wrought, could not retain them, or gain their assent to a doctrine that contradicted all their former ideas. Flesh and blood could not reveal such a mystery. Only the heavenly Father could give such a faith to the chosen Apostles, who declared that what appeared impossible and absurd to other men, was to them, as St. Peter expressed it, *the words of eternal life*. You must perceive that after your laws have forced me to renounce my ancient belief, I shall be at a loss what to put in its place. I am told there are two or three hundred different explanations of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Must I read and compare all that Polemic Divines have written on the subject? My life might not be long enough for finishing so laborious a task; or if I accomplished

accomplished it, my doubts might still remain, and my perplexities might be increased by so many contradictory arguments. In such a tired, undetermined state of mind, I might be compared to Noah's Dove, which, after having long wandered over uncertain and ever-moving waves, found no place to rest upon, till it returned to that Ark from whence it had flown.

That part of the Declaration which you read to me, and by which the Sacrament of the Mass, as used in the Church of Rome, is declared to be idolatrous and superstitious, I could not in conscience profess, even if I thought as you do, that there was nothing more than bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; for, in my opinion, the sins of idolatry and superstition depend on the intention of the person who is guilty of them. Now if you ask a member of the Church of Rome, or if you ask me, who must be conscious of what passes in my own mind, my intention, or what I mean to do, when I attend at our Greek Mass, I shall answer you, that my only design is, to adore and worship the almighty eternal Lord of all things, and the God-man Christ our Redeemer. If I think his body and blood present where they are not, it is an innocent error, which cannot rise to the guilt of idolatry and superstition. Suppose a Jew being informed of the miracles wrought by Christ, had come to adore the promised Messiah, and meeting with Judas Iscariot, and deceived by his haughty and self-important air, he had adored the Apostle, instead of his meek and humble Master, would you judge the innocent mistake an act of idolatry and superstition? When the Israelites most ungratefully forsook the worship of the God of Israel,
the

the God who had delivered them from their captivity, and when they danced round the Golden Calf, a representation of one of the Egyptian Deities, they were, no doubt, guilty of idolatry; but when Moses, knowing that some corporeal object was necessary to preserve the idea of a divine worship in vulgar minds, had formed a box, or cabinet, called the Ark of the Covenant, in which the tables of the law were deposited, the honours paid to the Ark were not idolatrous; neither did King David incur the guilt of Idolatry when he danced before it, because the worship of the Ark was referred to the God of Israel, whose laws it contained.

The word Superstition, I have been told, is derived from the Latin word *Supersto*, I stand upon, which was made use of when the Magician had formed a circle, to signify that those present at the incantations stood upon, or within, the circle which they thought would preserve them from the evil spirits raised by the magical arts of the Necromancer. This derivation may help to fix the meaning of the word, according to which the sin of superstition arises not from the action, but from the intention with which it is performed. If I gaze at the stars, to calculate their motions, my time is well employed in acquiring a knowledge that may be useful to mankind; but if I consider the face of the Heavens, as a book of fate, on which the lives and actions of men depend, I fall into that superstitious curiosity, called Judicial Astrology. If I read the Bible, to instruct myself in the commandments of God and his divine revelations, it is a laudable and pious action; but if I read a part of the Bible, by way of a charm, to cure the ague of a man, or the

E

lame-

lameness of a horse, I am guilty of Superstition. The Mass, or any other human action, may be made subservient to superstitious purposes; but if it is considered, as I believe it always is, as a prayer, or unbloody sacrifice offered to God, like that of Melchisedec, I can discover no reason why you should call it superstitious.

The Declaration, in the general words in which it is expressed, that "the invocation, or adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other Saint, as now used in the Church of Rome, is superstitious and idolatrous," is, I imagine, Learned Counsellor, inconsistent with your own principles. Permit me, like my countryman, Socrates, to ask you a few questions on the subject. Is it idolatry and superstition to call the faithful servants of God by the honorable appellation of Saints? or to dedicate Churches to God, under the name of Saint Mary, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, &c? or to allot particular days to commemorate the virtues of those Saints, and to ordain particular prayers or services for those days? or will you venture to say that all those practices are holy and proper for divine worship, when performed by a member of the Church of England, but that the same practices performed with the very same intention by a member of the Church of Rome, become acts of idolatry and superstition? or if you will not say this, where do you fix the point? or in what part of the Popish worship the sins of idolatry and superstition may be said to begin? Is it idolatry and superstition in us Greeks, or in those of the Latin Church, to call the Virgin, blessed through all generations? To repeat the same words that were addressed to her by the heavenly messenger of our Lord? Are we guilty of those
sins,

sins, when we pray that the Angels of God may protect us? or when we say that the Angels of the little children see the face of the Father that is in Heaven? or when we believe that there is joy in Heaven on the conversion of a sinner? May we not entertain in our minds sentiments of gratitude for those Beings who interest themselves in our eternal welfare? may we not express our grateful sentiments by thanksgivings? may we not desire and ask a continuance of that solicitude for our happiness hereafter? The rich man in the Parable called upon Father Abraham; was that an act of idolatry and superstition? was it considered in that light by the Jews? would our divine Master have instructed us by a Parable which might induce us to invoke Abraham, if such invocation was idolatrous and superstitious? You, Sir, or rather the more rigid Reformers, seem to look upon God as upon some narrow-minded earthly Monarch, who is jealous of the popularity of any of his ministers. We believe that Heaven's almighty Lord is pleased with the honours that are paid to his servants. He commands us to love him with a love of preference, by which we prefer his will to our own will, or to the will of any other creature. But this supreme love does not exclude the love of our neighbour. Quite otherwise. We are enjoined the love of every human Being; and this is a commandment like unto the first. If we may, if we are bound to love God, first, in himself, and then in those creatures he commands us to love, why may we not worship him, first, in himself, as the father of lights and giver of all good, and then worship him in those servants, whom he has made partakers of his glory? If the inferiour love of our neighbour is not derogatory,

gatory to, but is a necessary part of our supreme love of God, why may not inferiour honours rendered to intelligent Beings, as the ministering spirits and servants of God, be a proper part of the worship that is offered to God as a final object of all love and eternal veneration?

I would not have you imagine, Mr. Counsellor, that I believe all the false legends, or all the pretended miracles that have been imposed on the credulity of mankind, or that I approve of the various abuses in the worship of the Saints, which may tend to make religion appear ridiculous, or the work of Priestcraft, and which may want to be reformed in our Greek, as well as in the Romish Church. All I mean to prove by the questions I have asked you is, that the worship of the Saints (as it is understood by those members of the Greek and Latin Churches, who know the true principles of their religion) is not idolatrous and superstitious; and if you will give candid and dispassionate answers to these questions, you will be surprised to find our opinions to approach much nearer to each other than you had before imagined; and you will at least begin to doubt whether we are guilty of idolatry and superstition.

You told me I might live under that precarious and temporary protection, called connivance. But that I could have had under a Turkish Bashaw, in my own country, where I should not have had the mortification of seeing others bask in the sunshine of liberty, while I and my posterity are doomed to servitude and dependence on the mere compassion of our fellow subjects; for connivance is not liberty, it is not toleration; it is only a suspension of tyranny. You hold the sword of persecution against
me;

me; but at this time, as I do not happen to give you any offence, you do not thrust it into my breast. You are not, I believe, inclined to make a jest of my disappointment; otherwise I should think you meant to laugh at me, when you talk of liberty in religion as a right that no power upon earth ought to take from me. How can you approve of your laws speaking so different a language from that in which you speak yourself? Other nations may groan under severe laws made by their despotic Sovereigns, to whom the cruelty of their laws ought principally to be imputed; but you glory that British subjects are the makers of their own laws; and if persecution disgraces your laws, it reflects upon your nation. May you long enjoy the true glory of being your own legislators, and all the inestimable privileges belonging to the happy constitution of your Government! I must return to Greece, to inform my countrymen, what they will with some difficulty believe, that, according to the construction of your laws, they are all guilty of the Crime of Popery; and for their comfort I will add, that they are less restrained in the exercise and profession of their religion, under the Turkish government, than many of the Western Christians who refuse to profess the religion established by the laws of their country.

T H E E N D.

...but in this, as I do not intend to do you
any offence, you do not think into my mind
You are not, I believe, inclined to make a
of my disappointment; otherwise I should think
you meant to laugh at me, when you said of
liberty in religion as a right that no power upon
earth ought to take from me. How can you ap-
prove of our laws speaking to different a language
from that in which you speak yourself? Other
nations may grow under laws made by
their despotic sovereigns, to whom the exercise of
their laws ought principally to be imposed; but
you glory that British subjects are the makers of
their own laws; and if you mention disagree your
laws, it reflects upon your nation. May you long
enjoy the true glory of your own laws, and
and all the incumbrances, as belonging to the
happy constitution of Great Britain! I trust
you will wish some change, that, ac-
cording to the constitution of your law, they are
the only of the British; and for their
reason, I will add, that they are his retained in
the exercise and provision of their religion, under
the British government, than many of the Western
Gentlemen who refuse to prove the religion of
themselves by the laws of their country.